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## Soviet Radar Might See Stealth Planes

**T**he truth about the Stealth bomber program is being hidden from Congress and the American people, but the plane itself won't be able to hide from Soviet radar systems that have been in place for years.

This is the whispered word from defense experts who are familiar with the progress of the super-secret bomber.

Being invisible to Soviet radar, of course, is the whole point of the Stealth bomber. If it can't fool the Soviets, it will rank as the costliest mistake in military history—not only because of its estimated \$80 billion price tag, but because of the catastrophe that would result if the United States depends on Stealth to do what it can't do.

We've already reported the complaints of knowledgeable critics about various technical aspects of Stealth: its dangerous lack of speed and maneuverability, its lack of stability in flight and its short range.

Some members of Congress are also upset at the "trust us" policy of utter secrecy the Pentagon has used to push through its Stealth budgets.

But these complaints are dwarfed by what our sources say is Stealth's fatal flaw; namely, that older Soviet radar systems, in place for decades, could pick up incoming Stealth bombers in plenty of time to send interceptors to meet them. And because of Stealth's agonizingly slow speed, the planes would be sitting ducks for Soviet jet fighters.

Here's what the experts have told our associate

Donald Goldberg about Stealth and Soviet radar: Stealth was designed to reflect very little of the short-band radar waves emitted by the sophisticated "phased-array" radars developed in recent years. This is achieved by a combination of absorbent materials and airframe structure. There are no wing flaps or tails for stabilizers, and the engines are tucked inside the fuselage, so, from head-on, there is very little surface area to bounce back radar waves.

One problem with this is that Stealth bombers would probably be flying over the Arctic on their low-level path to Soviet targets. This means that radars looking down from satellites or high-flying AWACS-type planes would have little trouble spotting the lumbering Stealth bombers against the empty landscape of the polar icecap.

Even worse, our sources say, is that old-fashioned long-wave radar systems will be able to pick up Stealth bombers from any angle and from long distances. And the Soviets still have a variety of these radars, 25 or more years old, deployed and in use.

"The Russians never throw anything away," said one intelligence source.

For example, one Soviet early-warning radar, introduced in 1959 and nicknamed "Tall King" by the Pentagon, was designed for use against high-performance, high-altitude aircraft. But our sources say its low frequency will allow it to detect the low, slow Stealth bombers easily.

And once Stealth bombers are detected, they'll be unable to outrun or evade Soviet pursuit planes.